

Amendments to the Specification:

Please replace paragraph [0021] with the following amended paragraph:

[0021] In the elongated "U" of the preferred embodiment shown in Fig. 1, the bend 132 is a smooth radius that causes the tip 133 to be parallel to the needle shaft 131 and laterally offset from the shaft 131 a desired distance. However, in alternate embodiments the bend 132 may comprise more than one radius and/or one or more sharp angles, and the tip of 133 may angle toward, away from, or to either side of the shaft 131, with the movable arm 140 shaped and oriented correspondingly to allow the tip protector 141 to mate smoothly with tip 133. Both the needle shaft 131 and the tip protector 141 may also employ any angle, curve, or combination of angles and curves needed to allow the apparatus to reach any potential location for suture. In this embodiment the needle 130 and movable arm 140 have circular cross-sections, but any cross-sectional shape may be employed as desired. A hole 135 for suture material is bored radially through the needle a short distance below the base of the tip 133. The needle preferably comprises a proximal end and a distal end, the proximal end of the needle attached to the body and having a first central axis portion located within the proximal end of the needle, the distal end of the needle having a needle tip capable of penetrating tissue and having at least one passage to hold suture material, the tapered portion of the needle tip having a center line comprising the centroids of adjacent selected planar cross-sections of the tapered portion, each selected planar cross-section selected for having a smaller area than each proximally located planar cross-section having the same centroid as the selected planar cross-section, the distal end of the needle formed so that at least a first line is tangent to the center line and the first central axis portion